1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a tendency to lay stress on 'horizontal unity', the harvest festival tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village.

VI

The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the *okka* or patrilineal joint family, and only the male members of an *okka* have any rights in the ancestral estate. Women born in the *okka* leave it on marriage, while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of an *okka*. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of an *okka*, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps to kill in a hunt'.[1]

Only sons can continue the *okka*. But when there are no sons, a daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* way (see pp. 129–30), which has the effect of granting the children of either form of union membership of their mother's natal *okka*. If it is not possible to perpetuate the *okka* in either of these ways, a boy from another *okka* is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs, and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and *nāḍ*-assemblies were formerly vigorous institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the *okka*. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring

[1] Even today at a collective hunt bitches are not entitled to any share in the meat of the hunted animal, while each of the dogs is given a share.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

water from the domestic pond or well and carry manure in reed baskets to the fields.

The sexes are generally segregated. The outer veranda serves as a club for the men, and they sit down on the benches there, drinking, chewing betel, and talking. The women rarely visit the veranda.[1] Similarly, men rarely join the women who are all presumably sitting in the kitchen, or in one of the inner rooms. Men and women dine separately, the women dining after the men.

When relatives visit a Coorg house, the men guests join the men hosts in the veranda, whereas the women guests join the women hosts in an inner part of the house. During the harvest festival and festival of the village-deities the men sing and dance while the women watch them from a distance. Usually the men play a more active part in the festivals than the women. There is an oracle in the festival of every village-deity, and the oracles are usually men. Women oracles are indeed rare, but where they function they are important.

Women are expected to observe a stricter code of conduct than men. For instance, formerly, a Coorg woman who had committed adultery with a low-caste man was summarily thrown out of caste, whereas a lapse on the part of a man was not treated with equal seriousness. Again, there was some difference in the punishment meted out to a man and woman: a man was liable to be fined or excommunicated, whereas excommunication was the only punishment for a woman.

Different ideals are held up for men and women. Strength, skill in fighting and hunting, and courage are admired in a man. A proverb states, 'men should die on the battlefield, and women should die in child-bed'. The killer of a tiger or panther and mother of ten children were both accorded the honour of a *mangala* ceremony. (See Chapter III.)

Formerly women seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than they do nowadays. Elderly informants remember that even as recently as fifty years ago women used to sing and beat cymbals in public on festive occasions. Coorg folksongs tell us of women who killed tigers and held assemblies of men to ridicule. In some folk-

[1] Frequently a Coorg house has a separate entrance which enables the women to move in and out of the house without being seen by the men who are gathered in the veranda.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

songs it is the woman who takes the initiative in a love affair and seduces the man with whom she falls in love.

The general impression one gets from the folksongs is that women enjoyed much greater freedom in the past than they do today. It is probable that in the last 200 years Coorgs have orientated themselves more and more towards the patrilineal Kannaḍigas and moved away from the matrilineal Nāyars. This was accompanied by denying women active roles at the caste dances and festivals, and the home was seen more and more as their proper sphere of action.

But nowadays, under the influence of Western ideas, the Coorg woman is once again coming to the fore. Education is more widespread among Coorg women than among the women of other castes, including Brahmins. They are nurses, teachers, and doctors, and do not hesitate to live outside Coorg. The economic position of Coorgs and the fact that they marry comparatively late are some of the factors responsible for the greater spread of education among Coorg women. The greater ease with which Coorg women have 'emancipated' themselves is probably because they have not been as long under patriarchal ideas regarding womanhood as their sisters in the eastern part of the Peninsula.

VII

Among Coorgs, as among other Indians, respect has to be shown to elders. When a Coorg meets an elder on a ritual occasion he has to salute the latter by bending the upper half of his body and touching the elder's feet thrice with both hands. After each touch the younger man takes his hands to his forehead, where he folds them together. The elder touches the bent head of the younger man with both hands and then brings them together at the chest or forehead. A woman elder is expected to take only her right hand to the right side of her forehead, but I have seen women acknowledge a salutation in exactly the same manner as men.

When he is saluted an elder usually utters a blessing like 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'. But sometimes the blessing might be a long one, carrying a prayer to God and the ancestors to grant the younger person longevity, happiness, and 'eleven children, boys as well as girls'.

When two equals meet they salute each other merely by bringing

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

to dead ancestors, which are made in every Coorg house, are made in the kitchen alone instead of in the ancestor-shrine or anywhere else.

There are two types of houses in Coorg, one which has an open quadrangle in the middle and the other in which there is no such open quadrangle. In the former type, the four corners of the open quadrangle are supported by four pillars, and four planks (*aimaras*) connect the four pillars at a height of about 2½ feet from the ground. These planks are regarded as sacred: none may step across them, and no woman may sit on one of them.

Planks are affixed to the top of the parapet wall in the veranda. One of these planks is called the 'ancestors' plank' (*kāraṇavaṇḍa aimara*), and it is regarded as sacred. None may sleep on it. I have heard that anyone sleeping on the 'ancestors' plank' in the house of the Karavaṇḍa *okka* is thrown down to the floor by the spirits of the ancestors.

Women very rarely visit the veranda (*kaiyālé*), and when they visit it they may not sit on one of the planks there. Nor are they allowed to sit on the planks in the central hall, though very old women occasionally take the liberty of doing so when the senior males are away. On the second day of marriage the bride sits on a plank in the veranda of the groom's house, and this is part of the ritual of admitting her into her husband's house.

At some distance from the main building is a shrine (*kaimaḍa*) devoted to the worship of the ancestors. During the periodical ancestor-propitiations (*kāraṇava téré*), small figurines representing the ancestors are kept in the shrine and worshipped. During festivals, a lamp is lit in the shrine, and cooked food is placed before the lamp.

Kaimaḍas or ancestor-shrines seem to be a recent phenomenon, and before they became popular the dead ancestors were represented by unhewn stones fixed in earthen platforms which were built round the trunks of milk-exuding trees. These platforms were called '*kāraṇava taré*' or 'ancestors' platform'. Even today in Kiggaṭnāḍ there are only ancestor-platforms and no ancestor-*shrines*.

Like the ancestors, cobra-deities are represented by unhewn stones[1] and fixed in platforms built round the trunks of milk-exuding trees. The vegetation growing near a cobra-platform is

[1] Minor deities like Pūda and Guḷika are also represented by similar stones, and occasionally found alongside stones representing cobra-deities.

I:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Formerly every Coorg *okka* had one or more Pakeya or other low-caste families attached to it as slaves. This was again an hereditary relationship, and between families and not between individuals.

II

In Coorg the agnatically related males form a corporate body enjoying the bulk of the rights in the *okka*. Men, thanks to patri-locality, are assured of continuous residence in the *okka* to which they belong, whereas the women have to leave their natal *okka* on marriage and become members of their conjugal *okka*. The men have a sense of belonging to the *okka* which is absent in all but the oldest women. A girl has to leave her natal *okka* on marriage, and this break in residential continuity is an important factor having legal and other consequences. It takes a long time[1] for her to be accepted into her conjugal *okka*: only when her children are grown up does she have the assured sense of belonging to her conjugal *okka*.

Sons are the comfort and hope of parents. They are the pillars of the *okka*. They are the means by which the *okka* continues to exist, and the continuity of the *okka* is a matter of the most profound concern to the members. Daughters are destined to leave their natal *okkas* and the children that are born to them enrich and perpetuate a different *okka*.

A woman is not a member of an *okka* in the sense a man is, and the legal rights she enjoys are always inferior to a man's. There are compensations, however. A man enjoys his legal rights in one *okka*, whereas a woman enjoys hers in two, her natal and conjugal *okkas*. A girl is maintained in her natal *okka* till her marriage, or throughout her life if she decides to be a spinster. She has the right to return to her natal *okka* if, for example, her husband is impotent, or suffers from an incurable illness, or if her mother-in-law does not treat her properly. She has a right to return to her natal *okka* if she is divorced, assuming of course that she had not been divorced for a serious offence such as adultery with an Untouchable. Should she be guilty of such an offence she is thrown out of caste irrevocably and this means that she loses her rights in both her natal and her conjugal *okkas*.

At marriage her relatives give her gifts of jewellery, clothes, and vessels. These remain her property, and in the event of her divorce she brings them back to her natal *okka*.

[1] Cross-cousin marriage makes it easier for the girl to be absorbed into her conjugal *okka*.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

exist cheek by jowl as far as the bulk of Coorgs are concerned. The more inquiring of the men see the two modes of propitiation as mutually inconsistent, but such an inconsistency does not seriously trouble anyone. All over India Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic customs, often involving beliefs regarded as mutually inconsistent, are found existing together. Usually, the non-Sanskritic custom either drops out or is transformed to suit the Sanskritic custom, but this process takes a very long time. There is also no doubt, however, that the non-Sanskritic customs of every caste as well as those of sects and peripheral groups are continually being Sanskritized. This has been happening for over 2,000 years all over India.

Splinter groups like Amma Coorgs are decades, if not centuries, in advance of their parent-groups: the former have solved their problem by Sanskritizing their customs entirely while the latter are more conservative. Sometimes the splinter groups are so far in advance of their neighbours that they incur the wrath of everyone. They might even be ostracized by the other castes.

XV

It has already been mentioned that every *okka* has a *nāta*, which is a platform where unhewn stones representing cobra-deities are embedded. Vegetation is allowed to grow freely around this platform. There is a ban on women approaching the cobra-platform during their periods as the cobra-deities are extremely sensitive to impurity of any sort. Though women no longer observe seclusion during their periods, they are even now afraid of going near the cobra-platform because of the belief that its defilement would result in some misfortune to their *okka*. The angered cobra-deity may be roused to bite a member. This is clearly seen in the ancient saw, 'The deceit of women is very great, O, Snake, please do not bite us' (*pommakkaḍa māya marmāya pāmbē, ariyaté tiriyaté koriyaté pāmbē*): a member prays to the cobra-deity not to bite even though it has been angered by women going near the cobra-platform during their periods. Women are likely to conceal such violations from others, especially males. If they are frank enough to tell what they have done, purificatory and expiatory rites could be performed to appease the cobra-deity.

Among Hindus all over India, cobras and the ant-hills in which

4:Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

292 the same time gives vent to their vexation at the intractability of these rude mountaineers.

The head with its raven-hair is covered by a white muslin or coloured kerchief, one end of which encircles the forehead and the two corners are joined together at the back, allowing the rest of the cloth to fall gracefully over the shoulders. 301 [556] The wealth of a Coorg family is displayed by the richness of the ornaments of the women. Glass, silver or gold bracelets of a simple description span their wrists; their neck is decked with chains of coral, pearls or gold from which are suspended old Portuguese gold coins. Even the nose and the outer rein[1] of the ears are ornamented with pretty jewellery in gold, pearls and precious stones, and also silver rings are worn on the toes.

292 531 The white festive gowns of the men, as well as the kerchiefs of the women, are skilfully embroidered along the seams and in the corners with red marking cotton and the patterns of native design are often very elegant. The Coorg women esteem their own embroidery more than Berlin work, as the former unlike the latter shows the pattern equally well on both sides.

462 As for industry the Coorg women deserve high praise. They rise early and besides cooking and other domestic work, they bear a large share in the labours of the farm. The men plough the fields, transplant and reap the rice; the women carry manure, weed, fetch home and clean the paddy. The [357] [562] [554] men do no menial work, they leave that to their women and to their servants, whilst they enjoy a dignified repose, discussing the affairs of the house and chewing betel, or stitching a piece of clothing in which art many are as expert as professional tailors, others, gun on shoulder, wander through the jungles in search of game, but the height of their ambition is to figure in the capacity of a Government Official in the administration of their country.

[1] [Errata; This should read "rim". See corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473--Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

A Coorg woman is rarely idle, her busy hands find always some work to do, and no wonder, if we consider the life and bustle of a Coorg house with its 40, 60, or 80 and more inmates. Two or three generations, grandfather and grandmother, their sons and daughters-in-law and the children of these families all live and mess together. The labourers also belong to the household and look up to the mistress for food and orders. The fattening of the pigs, the milking of the cows, the water supply for the house, these and many other cares are under the immediate supervision of the mistress. Where peace and harmony exist, a Coorg house presents a patriarchal life indeed, but the idyllic picture is too often marred by discord occasioned by the harsh régime of an imperious mother-in-law, by the jealousy and heartburnings of married brothers, or the more material questions of family income and individual claims. The master or yejamána, who is always the senior male member of the house, has no easy position, especially in our days, when a tendency to break up these large houses clearly manifests itself. But Coorg women of a commanding spirit and superior character are often heard of who, like Abigail of old, with tact and wisdom subdue the unruly elements of this bustling human beehive and make the residents subservient to the common weal and honour of the family. Here is a story to the purpose:—"Six generations ago, there was a woman called Doddi Auwa[1]—the great lady—who lived at Almanda house, in the village of Arméri, which belongs to Beppunádu. She was the mistress of the Almanda property, being the only child of rich parents. She was a woman of extraordinary size and strength of body. Nor was she less distinguished by qualities of mind and character. Throughout the country she was known as the wisest, the richest, the strongest of Coorg women. Independent owner of a Coorg estate, she was at liberty to choose a husband for herself. Her choice fell upon a man of the same clan. Utta-

[1] [Errata: This should read "Dodda-Auva." see Corrigenda, Cat. 116, P. 493 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

592 cha, a son of the Mánanda house. He was a good sort of
562 a husband, but much inferior every way to his great wife.
173 Perhaps she had chosen him for this very reason. His place in the house was rather that of head-servant, than of husband and master. Every year the people of Arméri used to send a caravan to Irkúr, in the low country, near Cannanore, to fetch salt. At other times caravans, carrying rice to the coast, would start from Arméri during the dry season. On such occasions Doddi Auwa[2] would herself attend to every thing, put the cattle in readiness, prepare provisions, and at last accompay her husband and his oxen to the place of meeting, appointed for the whole train from the village. On parting, she would recommend her husband and his beasts to the kind offices of the best men in the caravan, and return home to her great house and her large business. Often, when husband or servants appeared too slow in loading the oxen, she would bid them step aside and taking the double sacks quietly with both hands, lay them softly and evenly upon the backs of the cattle. She was famed equally for wisdom and honesty.

Also Mudduráya who ruled Coorg in her time, respected and reverenced her, and often, on coming to Beppunádu, he stopped to have a talk with Doddi Auwa[2] of Almanda house. In the course of time Doddi Auwa[3] became mother of four daughters, but to her great grief no son was granted her, to succeed to the Almanda property. When the daughters came of age, she gave them in marriage to sons of neighbouring landholders. The eldest became the wife of a member of the Pálekanda family, the second married into the Púlanda house, the third was given to the Amnichanda family. The youngest, by a general agreement of the chiefs, was also given to the Pálekanda house, but, as heiress of the Almanda property, she had to give her sons, if she bore any, to her mother. This daughter, the youngest, bore 4 sons in succession. Of these, the two eldest were brought up by their grand-mother Doddi

[1 2 3 A, A, A [Errata: This should read "Doddi-Auva". See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, P. 493 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

Auwa[1] at Almanda. The name of one was Timmaya, that of the other Máchu. Máchu had a son Ayappa whose son was Bollu, the father of Stephanas, the first Coorg Christian." 592 562 173

The culinary art of the Coorg women is not much appreciated by a European palate, which relishes less hot condiments and a more sparing use of oil and ghee. Meat, whether game, pork, mutton, fowl or fish is cut into small pieces irrespective of joints and made into a nourishing savoury curry, which, with a dish of boiled rice, seasoned with mango, lime, citron and Ambatti-pickle, makes to native taste an excellent meal. The Coorg women excel in preparing a great variety of pickle and chutney, also sweet preserves and sweetmeats. Their appams or nírádóshe are relished even by Europeans. The kitchens of the Coorgs, which are inside the house, are remarkable for the cleanliness of the cooking-vessels in use. 252 262 [356]

The Coorgs generally take an early meal at 7 of rice-conjee seasoned with pickle or curds. At 10 they partake of a more substantial breakfast, consisting of boiled rice and curry. At 3 o'clock again conjee is taken as in the morning, and in the evening a hearty supper of boiled rice with vegetable or meat-curry and other condiments. Toddy of the Baine-mara (Caryota urens), also a kind of beer made of fermented rice, rice-brandy and arrack are the usual beverages, but lately the strongest European liquors have become only too familiar to the Coorgs at all hours of the day. 264 262 273 [177]

As is the custom with other Hindus, the Coorg women attend upon their lords and the male members of the house, before they sit down to their own separate meal. This selfish and unmanly custom greatly detracts from the charm of family life. The meals spread on brass plates, on low stools, are rather animal feeds than family gatherings round the social table. [562] [415] [352]

The Coorgs are very hospitable; no beggar goes away empty from their houses. A visit from Europeans is looked 574

[1] [Errata: This should read "Doddi-Auva" see corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 993 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

d. Childbirth.

844
783
The birth of a child renders not only the mother of the new born babe, but the whole house unclean and every one who may come in contact with them. This ceremonial uncleanness (Sútaka) lasts for 7 days, be the babe male or female. 846
The mother is confined for 2 months to the house and not expected to engage in any work, but to recover her strength and to devote herself entirely to her child. This singular custom no doubt greatly contributes to the general good health and vigour of the Coorg women. 842
Daughters are not much valued. They must be brought up and yet are destined 562
to be entirely alienated from the house by their marriage. Boys are the stay of families. As soon as a Coorg boy is 852
born, a little bow of a castor-oil-plant stick with an arrow, 562
made of a leafstalk of the same plant, is put into his little hands, and a gun fired at the same time in the yard. He is thus, at taking his first breath, introduced into the world as a future huntsman and warrior. This ceremony, however, has [178]
almost lost its meaning and ceases to be generally observed. 553
On the 12th day after birth, the child is laid into the cradle by the mother or grandmother, who on this occasion gives 846
the name, which in many instances is both well-sounding and significant: thus for boys—Belliappa (silver-father), Ponnappa (gold-father), Mandanna (the brother of the village-green); for girls—Púvakka (flower-sister), Muttakka (pearl-sister), Chinnawa (gold-mother).

854
The cradle, woven of slit bamboos and cane, and fitted to be hung up for swinging, requires but a little trimming to render it as tidy as any fashionable berceaunette; at all events the little Kodagu smiles and sleeps in it as happy as a prince; and as his mother bends over her darling with overflowing [539]
love and happiness and hums the Coorg lullaby:—